

NOAA FISHERIES NORTHEAST REGION

Sustainable Fisheries

The Sustainable Fisheries Division assures the maintenance of healthy fish stocks (for both commercial and recreational industries) through management of programs devised to eliminate overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks; and provide technical, scientific, and administrative coordination between the Regional Administrator, and the Fishery Management Councils.

- Spawning haddock on Georges Bank have produced the largest incoming group of young fish in forty years, perhaps the largest on record for the stock that has started to rebound under conservation measures enacted for Georges Bank groundfish during the 1990s by both the U.S. and Canada. If the young fish survive their first few years, researchers believe Georges Bank haddock could be fully rebuilt to 250,000 mt, a level that was thought unattainable, before the end of the decade.
- Large closure areas on Georges Bank and revision to the fishery management plan during the 1990s have increased annual ex-vessel revenues for Northeast sea scallopers by nearly 60% over lows in the last decade. Since 2000, revenues have been the highest of the last three decades.
- The summer flounder stock has responded dramatically to the management measures in place since 1993. Total stock biomass has increased to 67,500 mt, 27% above the overfishing threshold. In addition, spawning stock biomass, which had decreased to 5,200 mt in 1989 increased to 49,400 mt in 2003, a nine fold increase, as fishing mortality has declined to the lowest level in 22 years.

State, Federal & Constituent Programs

The State, Federal and Constituent Programs Office provides policy, financial, and technical representation for the development, monitoring, and implementation of state/federal interjurisdictional fishery management initiatives and projects with states, universities, and other constituents.

- The Division has invested in short- and long-term research projects under the Northeast Cooperative Research Program to develop advanced technology to understand, describe and predict changes in the natural environment by increasing the number of fishing vessels equipped with electronic data logging systems. Currently, the Cooperative Research Study Fleet includes 30 vessels equipped with the new system.



Protected Resources

The scientists and policy makers of the Protected Resources Division work with state, federal and environmental agencies to protect, and recover threatened and endangered marine and anadromous species, including marine mammals, sea turtles and Atlantic salmon. The Division carries out the programs mandated by the Marine Mammal Protection and the Endangered Species Acts.

- Take Reduction efforts that began in 1999 for the Northeast sink and mid-Atlantic coastal gillnet fisheries have reduced annual mortality of harbor porpoise caught in the gear by nearly 80%.

Habitat Conservation & Restoration

The Division of Habitat Conservation protects marine habitat through methods to avoid and mitigate the impacts of human activities, for the protection, conservation, enhancement, and reconstitution of living marine resources habitats. The Division provides a variety of consultative services to regulatory, permitting and management agencies, developers, environmental groups, and the public. The Habitat Restoration Division restores habitats for living marine resources through its Damage Assessment and Restoration Program and its Community-based Restoration Program. These programs restore habitats injured by oil and chemical discharges and work with community-based organizations to implement on the ground habitat restoration projects.

- NOAA Fisheries and the New England Fishery Management Council have implemented a series of closed areas within the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank for the protection of essential fish habitat (EFH) from adverse impacts associated with fishing gear. As components of Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP, these measures incorporate 2,811 square nautical miles of the continental shelf in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank.

Fishery Statistics

The Fishery Statistics Office has primary responsibility for collecting, processing and managing commercial and recreational fisheries data in the region to support living marine resource management activities. The Office coordinates statistical analysis of these data, quotas, and monitoring in cooperation with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and develops policy options for the Regional Administrator.

- In May 2004, the Office, working in close collaboration with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and Northeast region state resource management agencies introduced the "Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System" for mandatory use by all federally permitted seafood dealers in the Northeast region.

